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SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL FRONT-RUNNER COLOM PRESENTS PLAN OF  
GOVERNMENT

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Sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

1. (U) Summary: Presidential front-runner Alvaro Colom presented his plan for governing the country if elected. The plan, which represents the culmination of six years of work and the participation of all levels of government and sectors of society, is based on four strategic elements -- solidarity, governability, productivity, and regionalism. Colom outlined specific indicators in each of these areas, promising measurable results in health, education, security, economy, environment, and energy over the next four years to improve the quality of life and to reduce poverty. He envisioned a Guatemala that is democratic, free, prosperous, and multi-cultural and stressed the need for long-term planning and coordination for Guatemala to reach its full potential. End summary.

2. (U) Presidential candidate Alvaro Colom, who currently leads in the polls, presented his "Plan of Government" June 20 to a packed audience of about 1,000, which included members of Congress, members of the press and diplomatic corps, and representatives of political parties and international organizations. UNE Director of Strategy Jose Carlos Marroquin, who opened the presentation, described the Plan as "dynamic, long-term, and transformational," and the result of six years of coordination among all sectors of society, including the participation of 550 professionals, and consensus at the municipal, departmental, regional, and national levels.

3. (U) Colom's running mate Rafael Espada, who lamented popular dissatisfaction with their elected leaders, asserted that all Guatemalans have a "moral obligation" to change the situation. He stressed the need to create a climate of confidence and trust, and promised an end to disorder, injustice, corruption, and insecurity to transform Guatemala into a respectable and productive country. Marroquin declared that the Plan of Government, which aims to combat unemployment, poverty, and insecurity, and promote prosperity, harmony, and tranquillity, is a "plan of hope" for everyone, not only for the privileged.

4. (U) Colom, who underscored the need for change, described the plan as his commitment to fulfill his campaign promises. He promised to increase social investment, improve the quality of life, and reduce poverty. The plan includes goals for social and economic development, security, and modernization of the agricultural sector. In outlining the plan's four pillars -- solidarity, governability,

productivity, and regionalism -- Colom noted that Guatemala needs to strengthen social development through reduction of poverty; better access to health, education, and housing; and social protection. He also proposed the creation of a Ministry of the Family; improvement in basic infrastructure to the more vulnerable sectors of the population; and greater respect for multi-culturalism and ethnicity.

¶15. (U) In the area of governability, he proposed establishing a nationwide system of community-based security with the participation of all sectors of society. He also proposed implementation of popular election of National Civilian Police chiefs in each municipality. In the area of productivity, he emphasized the need to attract foreign investment and to increase national investment, propose a modern law to govern "zonas francas," and create a market intelligence unit to seek business opportunities. He also emphasized the need to improve physical infrastructure, risk management and attention to natural disasters, and to adjust the minimum salary each year in accordance with the inflation level. On regionalism, he focused on the need to strengthen Guatemala's leadership in Central America. He noted that Guatemala retains its leadership in the Central American market, with one-third of the regional GDP, but warned that Costa Rica is not far behind. He pledged to improve implementation of CAFTA and competitiveness in the European and Asian markets, and to address the needs of Guatemalan immigrants in the U.S.

¶16. (U) Among specific targets for 2011, Colom pledged an increase in economic growth from 5.2 percent of GDP to 6.3 percent, a decrease in inflation from 5.7 percent to 3 percent, a decrease in fiscal deficit from 1.9 percent of GDP to 1 percent, and the creation of 703,000 jobs. In the area of security, he pledged an increase in the annual budget from 1.20 percent of GDP to 2.60 percent, a decrease in the number

of murders of men per day from 16.1 to 3, a decrease in the number of murders of women per day from 2 to 1, a decrease in the number of assaults on public transport per day from 240 to 50, and a decrease in the number of kidnappings per month from 5 to 1. He proposed increasing the National Civil Police by 20,000 additional personnel and professionalizing the force. He also proposed creating special civil security forces to combat gangs. In the area of education, he promised to increase the annual budget from 2.60 percent of GDP to 3.90 percent by 2011, and to increase the percentage of primary school-aged children in school from 87.48 percent to 89.48 percent. He also promised to reduce the rate of poverty from 56 percent to 41 percent and the rate of extreme poverty from 16 percent of the population to 10.50 percent by ¶2011.

¶17. (U) Colom characterized his plan as realistic, flexible, goal-oriented, and long-term with intermediate goals, and invited the public to discuss it and to suggest changes. The plan has already undergone several changes since the initial draft in 2002, reflecting the changing needs of the population.

¶18. (SBU) Comment: Colom comes across to voters as earnest in his commitment to create a more prosperous, stable Guatemala, though there is a growing cynicism about the pledges of would-be presidents. He proposes to do in four years what previous governments have failed to accomplish since the signing of the Peace Accords in 1996, and there is no indication that current conditions are more conducive to success than in previous administrations. Colom did not explain how he would increase social spending and double security spending, while also cutting the fiscal deficit in half. But with every candidate promising transformational change, Colom's vision is in line with his competitors. He has more credibility on his social sector promises and less on security than Perez Molina.  
Derham